

# Life of the Spirit

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## CONTEMPLATIVES AT HOME

BY

THE EDITOR



CONSIDERABLE interest has been shown almost from the foundation of this review for the problems and practice of those who lead by necessity or by choice a contemplative life in the world. A certain amount of discussion has taken place in its pages regarding the possibility of finding some way of life which could be followed in a more organised manner. So far the results of the discussion have been in the main negative.

To begin with it was hoped that the new 'Secular Institutes' which are in themselves designed for the direct lay apostolate, might provide a framework for some similar institute for contemplatives. This however seems to have proved to be a false scent. It is difficult enough to organise for an active life a group of people not living under a rule which indicates what is to be done from hour to hour. But for a group whose external lives are similar almost exclusively in what they are not rather than in what they are with the sole exception that they all seek closer and more solitary union with our Lord. The question of organisation becomes almost impossible. For most of those who are able to devote sufficient 'spare time' in solitude on their knees before God are otherwise tied to family obligations or necessities of work or even to the obligations of their own health which make it impossible for them to conform to any external rule of life which would embrace a large number of people. Many of them would in fact have been contemplative religious had the situation of their lives been different. The reason why such people are not religious is precisely because for one reason or another the life of external rule has proved impossible.

It would therefore seem more profitable to abandon the discussion of this side of the life, at least for the time being, and to concentrate on the more positive aspects of the manner in which one can grow in contemplation while remaining an isolated individual in the midst of the rush of modern existence. There are many things of importance in such a life which need to be discussed beginning with the nature of the dedication which so many feel drawn to make, the

dedication by vow. It is possible to consecrate the whole of a life lived thus in the world by a simple and private vow of chastity, and thus give point to the mortifications which must go hand in hand with prayer. In this light penances should come under review as well as the whole question of balance, since the solitary life so easily becomes out of 'true', out of plumb-line uprightness and it is difficult to know how far regular hours of prayer are to be adhered to in the face of demands of charity to one's neighbour. The relation between action and contemplation of course needs to be more and more clearly described. There are questions too of *lectio divina*, particularly with respect to the Scriptures, and the necessity and possibility of spiritual direction. Above all the nature of divine Union should be considered in its great variety of applications.

It is hoped that these and similar questions will be 'covered' in the course of time in the pages of the LIFE OF THE SPIRIT. It has been suggested too that a retreat for people who feel called to strive in a special way for Union with God while living in the world would be helpful for the many individuals who find themselves without much support from their surroundings. With a view to exploring this suggestion the Cenacle Convent at Grayshott has kindly offered to set aside one of its retreats this autumn for this purpose. The suggestion as expressed by one correspondent to the Editor of LIFE OF THE SPIRIT is that an annual retreat should be arranged for persons interested in the solitary and contemplative life. 'Not with any idea of "getting together" but of getting some guidance as to special problems and to have the support of the prayers of all.' The date suggested is November 18 to 22. Any who are interested in the proposal should write to the Reverend Mother, Convent of the Cenacle, Grayshott, Hindhead, Surrey.

THE EDITOR.



## MYSTICAL PRAYER

This short fragment on the early stages of mystical prayer occurs in the Bodleian MS. Douce 262 fol. 132-133, among copies of the *Cloud of Unknowing* and the *Epistle of Privy Counsel* and extracts from Latin mystical works. The MS. is of the late fifteenth century or first years of the sixteenth century, but the fragment of an earlier date. This piece is interesting as showing an early example of devotion to the Heart of Jesus. The spelling has been slightly modernised.

C.K.



WHEN a soul beginneth to feel grace work in him, he waxeth then sorry for his sin, and remembreth his great unkindness done against God and in what peril his soul is in; he weepeth and wailleth his offence and with great sorrow and lamentation crieth and calleth to God for mercy. Then thus continuing he get-

teth him to religion, or at leastwise to confession, there purging himself clean from all rust of sin by contrition and penance doing. Anon he feeleth him clean in body and soul and delivered from gnawing of conscience, which is the greatest pain on earth. Then continently<sup>1</sup> he feeleth great sweetness both in reading and prayer and sermons hearing, thinking that this doth all worldly solace exceed, and great comfort he feeleth in that which not long before was full tedious and painful to him. Then is he prest<sup>2</sup> and ready to do all things that should please God, and fleeing those things that should displease him. Then learneth he meekness, dread and love, converting evermore his will and prayer to the will of God.

Thus continuing, God, seeing the good will and desire of the soul draweth him more near to himself by a sweet stirring of love and compassion; so that where before that soul wept and sorrowed for his sins and unkindnesses, now wailleth he for love and compassion; so that no comfort nor joy is to him beside the remembrance of Christ's passion and the joys of heaven.

Thus, persevering in purity of conscience, in prayer and meditation, suddenly God sendeth into the soul a burning love of desire so fervently that all bodily might faileth and the corrupt body falleth to the earth. Then thinketh he of no joy, nor pain, nor sin, nor of the passion of Christ, nor of our Lady, nor of nothing in heaven, in hell nor in earth, but only on God; not what God is in kind<sup>3</sup> and

1 Forthwith.

2 French *prêt*=ready; with old sense, quick.

3 Kind in this and all medieval contexts means 'nature'; 'kindly' is 'according to the nature of'. So here 'what God is in himself and his attributes'.

manner, but that God is all his desire; so that, for abundance of love that is in the heart, the mouth speaketh: 'Heart, heart, heart!' or, 'God, God, God!' Then is the soul in a still rest that he feeleth God in himself and he in God. So glad is the soul and body then, that marvel it is that the heart of man breaketh not out of the mouth, for love unto God.

Other while (at other times), ere the soul is rapt into God he seeketh, at the first kindling, in the streets of heaven amongst saints and angels, (him) whom his soul desireth, not caring for their company and joy, for his mind is not on them, nor on none other thing, as I said before, but only on God. When he has thus sought and found his love, cometh he with a meek and a fervent desire homely to him.

Notwithstanding, not by and by,<sup>4</sup> he entereth not into our Lord, but cometh about him with a burning love, and piteously standeth by for God his desire, that he may enter into his heart. But God feigning himself ungentle and uncourteous and as a man taking no heed to his lover, keepeth him off. Nevertheless the silly<sup>5</sup> soul abideth in a longing desire trusting to have what he came for. Then God, with lovely countenance taketh the soul and putteth him into the midst of his heart. Then all the world, nor I trow, all heaven and hell cannot express the joy that the soul feeleth in his Lord and Love. Amen.

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<sup>4</sup> i.e., not at once.

<sup>5</sup> silly = simple; cf. expression 'silly sheep', simple sheep.



# THE SOUL OF CHRIST

BY

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.



GARDENERS sometimes say that a certain degree of drought strengthens the roots of plants. The grass of a newly growing lawn finding no moisture above the ground in the light and heat of the sun thrusts its roots deeper and deeper into the soil in search of life-giving refreshment. Similarly the soul which is left by God in a dry and waste land abandons the hope of refreshment in the external life of experience and the senses and begins to sink more completely into the reality of God, but in the darkness of the lower soil, in the darkness of faith as opposed to the distinctness of emotional experience.

We have seen Mother Julian left with the externally arid doctrine of God's changeless will, predestination and the wayward behaviour of the predestined. Little light is shed on this problem without a deepening faith which sees things more in God than in their own proper natures. And for Mother Julian this was the way she saw sin and predestination, for God is changeless and all time is eternally present to him. Nevertheless this approach would seem to be rather 'high-flown' and to be concerned almost too much with great ideas rather than with the concrete reality which is so precious to the soul resting in union with God. Indeed such a soul can never long view such deep mysteries without having recourse to our blessed Lord, to the Word who became flesh in order to solve all problems. Thus it is that Mother Julian too, far from being the sort of mystic who recedes from the reality of the humanity of Christ the deeper she sinks in prayer, grows ever closer to him, thrusting her roots always more securely into this sweet Ground of prayer the more difficult the problems appear.

The permanence of the soul who shall be saved can be seen not only in the divine mind, but in the soul of Christ the well beloved Son in whom the Father contemplates the souls of all the just. Walter Hilton had shown<sup>1</sup> how the soul is transformed into the soul of Jesus Christ in three stages:

'There are three manners of transforming of the soul. One is when the soul is made meet and buxom to the will of God . . . for to transfigure, and turn and have in itself Christ's passion, with

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<sup>1</sup> And perhaps Mother Julian had heard it from his own lips or read it from his pen.

suffering of all shames and reproofs as Christ suffered. . . . Another there is . . . when his soul is oned with Christ and right homely with him. And the soul hath then great feeling of Christ's love. . . . The third transforming is when Jesu Christ and a soul are so perfectly, so unpartably, and so accordably oned and bounden together, that Christ is in the soul and the soul is in him so fully as if they both were but one spirit, as St Paul saith: "Whoso cleaveth to God, he is one spirit with him".<sup>2</sup>

Mother Julian in her life of union must certainly have reached this third degree; and in her realisation of this oneness of soul with our Lord she discovers a more tangible solution to her puzzles regarding the love of God as it works out in a fallible and failing world. Objective as always, she sees not so much her own soul as that soul in its identification with Christ. Firstly she takes 'all the gracious comfort' not simply for herself in her own soul but for all her 'even-Christians', understanding the meaning of her vision in general and 'nothing in special' (c. 37, p. 76). This general conception of man's soul remains in the temporal order, so that it is identified with 'sensualite' which though St Thomas regards this as the sensitive appetite is certainly to be understood (as Miss Warrack does) as the 'sense-soul' or as the soul in the time series modified and conditioned by the whole texture of human temporal experience including that of the senses. It is in this soul of ours that the Godhead dwells by grace in spite of the ups and downs of human actions. Here therefore is to be found the divine image of the blessed Trinity imparted by the infusion of sanctifying grace into the soul which thus becomes the '*made-trinity*', like to the unmade blissful Trinity, known and loved from without beginning, and in the making oned to the Maker' (c. 55, p. 133, cf. c. 45, p. 94). But the way in which the soul is made into the Trinity is of course through the meditation of God-made-man, who because he has taken on the very flesh of man himself resides in a special way in the 'sensualite' or sense soul. The substance of the soul, according to what we have seen remains more permanently grounded in God, but our Lord comes to unite in himself the permanent substance of the soul and the ever changing 'sense-soul' or 'sensualite' for he reigns in our human nature.

And as anent our Substance and sensualite it may rightly be called our soul; and that is because of the oneing they have in God. The worshipful City that our Lord Jesus sitteth in is our sensualite (sense-soul), in which he is enclosed: and our kindly substance (i.e. Nature substance) is enclosed in Jesus with the

<sup>2</sup> *Eight Chapters on Perfection*. A translation made by Hilton. (*Minor Works*, p. 103).



blessed soul of Christ sitting in rest in the Godhead (c. 56, p. 136)<sup>3</sup>. This 'reforming' or transforming of man's soul into the soul of Christ is, as we shall see, one of the great contributions Walter Hilton has made to the understanding of the spiritual life in its development towards holiness. But it is very interesting to find it taken up by Mother Julian and applied to her own puzzlement and contemplation of God's mysterious love.

For this identification with our Lord is of course of supreme importance for the soul seeking to perfect her union with God. For the soul will never be accepted in the fulness of the life of the Trinity in so far as it is conformed to the image of the Son, hidden so to speak within the hypostatic union and thus drawn almost by a subterfuge into the infinite and immanent action of the Father and the Son (in whom the Christian lies hid) loving one another in the Holy Spirit. In this way the soul, which in itself is a mediation between God who makes it directly and through no medium and all earthly things from which the body is composed, is most closely associated with the Mediator 'twixt the supernatural, intimate life of the Deity and the whole universe. 'The fullest Substance and the highest Virtue is the blessed soul of Christ', with which man is somehow identified on account of the Word having taken on man's nature, and which is itself fully 'oned into God' (c. 53, p. 129), with the result that every human soul is assimilated to the blessed soul of Christ, which itself enjoys the infinite love of God.

Because of this great, endless love that God hath to all Mankind, He maketh no disparting in love between the blessed soul of Christ and the least soul that shall be saved. . . . Where the blessed soul of Christ is, there is the substance of all the souls that shall be saved by Christ (c. 54, p. 130).

Although man is therefore in some sense torn constantly in two by the fact of having a part of himself in Christ and a part in the sinful murkiness of the Adam-nature, part in heaven and part on earth, part of weal and part of woe (cf. c. 52, v. 122), nevertheless the presence of our Lord reigning in the centre of the soul gradually gathers together all the disparate parts of a man's life under the domination of the soul, which in its turn becomes more wholly one with the soul of Christ. The division between these extremes will always remain with us in this life. But we are reminded that ever within the perfect unity of Christ on earth there existed a conflict of some sort between the '*voluntas ut natura*' and the '*voluntas ut*

<sup>3</sup> The whole of the chapter must be studied. Miss Warrack modernises the first line quoted above as 'Anent our Substance and our Sense-part, both together may rightly be called our Soul'.

*ratio*', the natural instincts and the free choice. Mother Julian must surely have been thinking in terms of this distinction when she wrote:

Repenting and willing choice be two contraries which I felt both in one at that time. And these be of our two parts: the one outward, the other inward. The outward part is our deadly flesh-hood, which is now in pain and woe . . . and that part it was that repented. The inward part is an high, blissful life<sup>4</sup>, which is all in peace and in love . . . and this part is that in which mightily and wisely and with steadfast will I chose Jesus to my Heaven.

. . . The inward part is master and sovereign to the outward, and doth not change itself with, nor take heed to the will of that. . . . The inward draweth the outward by grace, and both shall be oned in bliss without end, by the virtue of Christ. (c. 19, p. 43; compare St Thomas III, 46, 6).

Since our Lord is everlastingly with us reigning in the soul, in heaven and on earth, his presence has the constant effect of drawing all the threads of our existence together. Before the resurrection it was he who suffered the pains of every man's sins and all the desolation of mankind which he saw in his agony. But 'now he is uprisen and no more passible, yet he suffereth with us' (p. 44). In other words even our sin and suffering is to be associated with God made man in a way in which it could never be associated with God without the incarnation. He has suffered for our sin, and we fill up what is wanting in his passion. In so far as he is Head of the Mystical Body he is in heaven glorified and impassible, but 'anent his Body in which all his members are knit he is not yet fully glorified nor all impassible' (c. 31, p. 63). In fact Mother Julian considers the mystery of the 'Godly will' in man the higher part of his soul and all the mysterious dualism implied in the relation of time to eternity in terms of the concrete reality of the Mystical Body which is Christ himself. The Godly will which we have constantly in God never assenting to sin is to be found in the concrete in the will of Christ 'whole and safe', for he sums up all that is best in man's nature as the 'form' of the Mystical Body, while at the same time being God himself.

The Mid-Person willed to be Ground and Head of this fair Kind (i.e. human nature): out of whom we be all come, in whom we be all enclosed, into whom we shall all wend, in turn finding our full heaven in everlasting joy (c. 53, pp. 127-8).

Consequently it may be said that our Substance is in God, for 'where the blessed Soul of Christ is, there is the substance of all the souls that shall be saved by Christ', though of course our substance remains a thing created—indeed is not the soul of Christ

<sup>4</sup> Note that Mother Julian often speaks of the soul itself as the life rather than as the source of the life which is the more scholastic attitude to the idea of the soul.



a thing created too? (c. 54). In this one Soul were and are to be found the two parts, the higher and the lower, in which also men share in so far as they belong to the mystical body so that they suffer in their 'sensualite' together with our Lord and they remain centred in the Godhead, oned to the highest Principle in the hypostatic union (c. 55). In this way God himself provides not only our soul's Ground, in whom we live and move and have our being, but also holds the two conflicting parts together as 'the Mean' (c. 56), uniting as he does in Christ both the sensitive and the spiritual natures—'and thus in Christ our two natures are oned' (c. 57). Finally God—the blessed Trinity—in making the blessed humanity of Christ 'made us all at once; and in our making He knit us and oned us to Himself, by which oneing we are kept as clear and as noble as we were made'; in fact in Christ our diverse paths which are so ready to fall asunder are all held in one (c. 58).

This is the summary of the doctrine concerning man's soul and our Lord's soul as the point of reconciliation between the eternal perfection of man in God and the temporal and successive imperfection and sin of the passing years. In viewing this doctrine we have to remember how dynamic the conception of the mystical body yet remained. For us today the conception of the wonderful soul of Christ is limited to that of an individual human soul, overflowing with perfection and power certainly but nevertheless isolated, unique, unshared. The soul of our Lord is of course the form of this physical body and thus individualised it remains to that extent the source of activity of the single human nature. At the same time the Incarnation is the greatest of Sacraments, so that it is an incomplete and unreal view of our Lord to restrict his soul and his human nature to a more or less material or at least externalised view of the Word made flesh. In this way our Lord himself tends to become exclusively an object of worship and veneration, always high up above us, always expecting our service and respect as *the* holy Thing, the one holy point in the midst of a corrupt and degenerate universe. There is much truth in this view of the Sacred Humanity but it is not the primary or essential reality of the Incarnation, nor is it the one which predominated with the great spiritual writers of the Middle Ages, like Mother Julian, despite her vivid and direct understanding of Jesus as her heaven.

The '*sacrum commercium*' which took place when our Lady conceived the Son of God was a commerce between the whole human race and the one, triune God, not merely a commerce between this one individual human nature. The Son took flesh in order that each man, every one born of woman, should become

the flesh of God, part of his body. The Word enfleshed is an outward sign of inward grace; the physical presence of his historic body is the '*res et sacramentum*', the miraculous Gift which is intermediate between the outward physical, symbolic creation and the inner sanctification of men. Power goes out from him to heal, to make whole, to gather all the broken parts together into himself; he draws all things to himself. He walks through the valley of dry bones not as the only living and holy son of Adam, the admiration of the deathly skulls and skeletons, but as the Life who has come to give these bones his flesh and his soul. From this point of view, which so saturates the teaching of St Paul who finds that Christ at length lives his very life rather than he himself, it is easy to realise that to look at the human soul is to see Christ's soul and to look at his unique soul is to see that of all mankind. 'It was his purpose endless to make Mankind. Which fair Kind was ordained to (adyte to) his own Son, the Second Person' (c. 58, p. 141-2).

It may be partly due to the modern spirit of individualism that we too readily accept a view of thousands of millions of human beings each with a soul, and beside these the very special Being of Christ with his human soul. Each is utterly distinct though receiving in passing a great number of gifts and benefits, especially from the Word incarnate. Yet in the eyes of faith such an individualistic view is insufficient and unsatisfying. Faith sees in every man an image of the Son, the Word Incarnate, so that Margery Kemp wept whenever she saw a man child, for it spoke to her of the Child of Bethlehem. Nor is the image a mere replica; it is informed by the living form of Christ, so that all souls are yet one Soul. In order to grasp this central doctrine we must quote at some length from Mother Julian's sixteenth and last revelation:

Then our Lord opened my spiritual eye and shewed me my soul in the midst of my heart. I saw the soul so large as it were an endless world and as it were a blissful kingdom. And by the conditions that I saw therein I understood that it is a worshipful City. In the midst of that City sitteth our Lord Jesus, God and Man, a fair person of large stature, highest Bishop, solemnest King, most worshipful Lord; and I saw him clad solemnly. And worshipfully he sitteth in the soul, even-right (i.e. straight-set) in peace and rest. And the Godhead ruleth and sustaineth heaven and earth and all that is . . . [and] the place that Jesus taketh in our soul he shall never remove it, without end, as to my sight: for in us is his homliest home and his endless dwelling (c. 67, p. 167).

In this passage, one of the most striking in the book, we may find many of the particular threads of doctrine here considered woven into the true pattern. Looking at the soul with the eyes of faith



one sees a creature, the microcosm which sums up all creation, and the creator making it and ruling; for it is impossible to see the creature wholly without also catching sight of the Creator. But more than that the Soul is seen to reflect the Son become man and Jesus appears to rule and guide it in the depths of its being. Thus he is the bishop of the kingdom of the soul who in consequence must render continual reverence and worship through him to the Father. Yet even this does not express the full unity of the soul with Christ who not only inspires its worship and governs its movements but dwells within it as in his homeliest home for ever. This indwelling of our Lord indicates the identification of which St Paul is so fond of speaking. By grace the mind of a man may become filled with the divine presence as it constantly looks with the eyes of faith at Jesus, contemplating him with such devotion that anything else can only be seen in connection with him. By grace moreover the will becomes occupied, indeed pre-occupied by the love of Jesus, until it can love only Jesus and what Jesus loves. Putting on, therefore, the mind and will of Christ our Lord the soul (whose two spiritual faculties they are) becomes Christ. The identification ultimately is one therefore of Charity.

For in man's soul is his very dwelling; and the highest light and the brightest shining of the City is the glorious love of our Lord, as to my sight (*id.* p. 168).

Mother Julian declares later that although she was shown God in many different ways both in heaven and on earth she never saw him rest or dwell anywhere except in man's soul. She saw the Incarnation and the Passion; she saw God 'in a point'; she saw him leading us to heaven; but she discovered his delightful resting-place only in the soul (*c.* 81); for this soul is the microcosm which contains not only all the elements of the universe but, through the Incarnation and its grace and love, the very being of the Trinity.

We can therefore follow the growth of union in terms of this oneness of the soul with God in Christ. Every soul since the divine 'commercium' reflects the presence of God made man, but for the soul outside faith it remains only an unrecognised reflection. In the unnatural state of a soul with faith but in sin the reflection has already a new reality in that the mind, at least, is informed by the presence of Christ's soul for his faith touches the dynamic soul of Christ; the divine spark already kindles the soul in some way. With charity of course the soul becomes possessed by the soul of Christ. But here there are degrees; for the soul informed by grace may have a fitful love which dwells uncomfortably with many imperfections and venial sins. As the flame grows in intensity and the dross is burned away so the soul becomes more and more

assimilated to the soul of Christ.

This doctrine is not a sophisticated type of humanism which concentrates on man and his integral perfection. It draws man into the soul of Christ and thus into God; it does not attempt to draw God down into a merely human habitation wherein he is regarded merely as the perfection of human nature. The soul in its faith and love is drawn from creatures to consider itself; but it cannot rest in self because it discovers this blissful reality of Jesus reigning in the soul and so is it drawn up into heaven (c. 78, p. 169). From 'charity made' the soul plunges into 'charity unmade'.

Charity unmade is God; Charity made is our soul in God; Charity given is virtue. And that is a precious gift of working in which we love God, for himself; and ourselves, in God; and that which God loveth, for God (c. 84, p. 201).

The centre is God not man, but that centre is shown to us as God made man, or in other words the centre is the Mystical Body. 'For Jesus is all that shall be saved, and All that shall be saved is Jesus. And all of the Charity of God' (c. 51, p. 118).

The final resolution of the problems of a Christian, of the problems of sin and predestination, of grace and free-will, of time in its contact with eternity, is therefore not to be sought in some abstruse theological *discursus*; it remains within the reach of the simplest and most illiterate Christian. The Christian whether he be the greatest theologian or the meanest peasant seizes on Christ Jesus as his salvation and there he finds all puzzles resolved. In Jesus he discovers the inheritance of all ages, in Jesus he finds the meaning of sin, evil, suffering, in Jesus he is oned by ever growing love. 'He claspeth us and encloseth us for tender love that he may never leave us, and is more near to us than tongue can tell or heart can think' (c. 72, p. 176). The life of the Christian is simply to find all in Jesus. The true saint and contemplative does not reach beyond the Word made flesh; he does not have to stretch out above himself into some remote heaven.

Thus was I learned to choose Jesus to my heaven, whom I saw only in pain at that time: meliked no other heaven than Jesus which shall be my bliss when I come there. And this hath ever been a comfort to me that I chose Jesus to my heaven, by his grace, in all this time of passion and sorrow (c. 19, p. 42).

And she goes on to say that it was the 'higher part' of her soul, the *ratio superior*, which firmly and securely chose Jesus as heaven.



# THE FAITH AND MAN'S MIND

BY

AUSTIN BARKER, O.P.



THE first and most pressing application of the principles at issue described in the preceding section<sup>1</sup>, must be concerned with that assent of the human mind which is claimed for the truths revealed. The Catholic Church has always been explicit in affirming that the truths of Christ were dogmas to be accepted by faith. She has consistently corrected those of her members who have ventured to maintain that these dogmas lay within reach of unaided reason. They are to be received by faith, and faith was to be defined as an assent of the mind, not based upon the intrinsic evidence of the truth accepted, but based upon the word of an authority revealing. It was said to Nicodemus: 'I say to thee that we speak what we know, and we testify what we have seen, and you receive not our testimony. If I have spoken to you earthly things and you believe not, how will you believe, if I shall speak to you heavenly things?' (John 3, 11-2). The Precursor in uttering his own witness had spoken similarly: 'He that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth, and no man receiveth his testimony.' (Jn. 3, 31-2.) And Christ himself continuously in his discourse spoke of his own witness which he was sent to give. 'I am come in the name of my Father, and you receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive. How can you believe, who receive glory from one another: and the glory which is from God alone you do not seek?' . . . 'There is one that accuseth you Moses, in whom you trust. For if you did believe Moses, you would perhaps believe me also: for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?' (John 5.)

Moreover the statements which Christ made to men were plainly in large part affirmations which directly and of themselves they could not discover. 'For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him' (Jn. 6); 'I will ask the Father and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever; the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because he shall abide with you and shall be in you.' (John 14.) From these and similar passages from the words of Christ two things stand out clearly. The first is that the message he brings on earth is of truths

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<sup>1</sup> *Life of the Spirit*, August 1949, vol. iv, no. 39, p. 74.

which can only be received on his word. He was sent on earth, and it was his glory at the end that he had spoken his part, the words that had been given to him. The words they had heard from him were not his, but the Father's who sent him. And they were clothed with a certain obscurity, for they spoke the wisdom not of this world, nor of the powers of this world, but the wisdom of God; therefore uttered in mystery, the evidence of things not seen, veiled under the obscurity of faith. But the second point that stands forth in the statements of Christ is that this revealed truth is some kind of enlightenment, yet not human in cause, not an enlightenment by man: 'flesh and blood hath not revealed it but my Father who is in Heaven'. And this obscure enlightenment is only to those who believe. Hence the traditional creed is propounded and accepted by the members of the Church, and seen while on earth as through a glass in a dark manner; while by others it is not seen at all, but derided as foolishness. St Paul will insist with the Church that the darkness which shrouds the revealed word, is to the natural mind, darkness complete. Even to the mind enlightened by grace of faith, it remains obscure; afterwards in heaven the truth revealed shall be seen face to face in vision, when immediate sight shall replace faith, and the spoken promises of Christ be fulfilled.

These plain statements of the case, repeated by the Church in every generation, have been and will always be a certain shock for the mind. A superficial hearing of them, and certainly a hostile one, will always consider them to imply an invasion upon the intellectual rights of human nature. From the earliest centuries to our own day they have been a stumbling-block, and the memories of the Church recall recurring crises when men, now her champions, now her opponents, have striven to press her into an easier intellectual alliance with human thought. Earlier even than the Pelagians and as late as the Modernists of yesterday, the same plea and complaint have been raised in protest. The mind of man is his highest and noblest prerogative, autonomous, supreme and authoritative; whatever be outside its sphere, beyond its terms, can make no claim upon him. It is his sovereign power, his absolute rule, and to no external authority may he abdicate its rights.

This is the implicit or explicit protest common to the ancient Pelagians who denied the necessity of grace and to the recent Modernists proclaiming the ultimate independence of the human reason. The Anglican Bishop Gore writes typically: 'We are bound to claim the fullest liberty for science and for reason in all its legitimates, because *reason is at the last resort our only instrument of truth*. Thus we cannot play false to our reason, or be content with any crude antithesis between faith and reason, *faith*, we find,



*being only reason in the making*'. In the same context this same Anglican Modernist could write: 'I have, ever since I was an undergraduate, been certain that I must be, in a sense, a free-thinker, and that either not to think freely about a disturbing subject, or to accept ecclesiastical authority in place of the best judgment of my own reason, would be for me an impossible treason against the light'. . . . But the Modernist school speaking thus is in direct line of descent from the earlier Protestants, who, rejecting all external authority of the Church, enthroned the individual's private judgment and a subjective experience as the ultimate arbiter of objective truth. In much the same way, the subjectivism, idealism, relativism which is the chief mark of modern philosophy, is but a logical development from the Cartesian revolution which cast aside the Aristotelian and Thomist realism of right reason. These parallel developments have gone hand in hand, and by the present they have almost run their full course to the complete chaos and disorder that rules in both religious and philosophical circles outside the Church. *Quot homines tot sententiae* is a fair verdict on the intellectuals of any repute today, and with this world-wide discord there naturally results a practical scepticism and a paralysis of thought. In the remains of the civilisation which the Church has now to address, objective authority has almost everywhere lost credit, intellectual confusion is the chief note of non-Catholic society, and the sects have so multiplied that, while abandoning gradually the remains of their Christian tradition, they have become but ghosts of their earlier power, with little or no doctrinal conviction. Their effect now, at best, is but a purely philanthropic activity.

It is hardly necessary to dwell at any length upon the imaginary and spurious antagonisms that for a whole century have haunted the journalistic debates, and still in English backwaters do service for casual newspaper controversy; except to remark that the popular mind is still necessarily infected by them, and the mechanical and standardised education that prevails is calculated to continue them. It was ignorantly supposed, and is still in this 'educated' community taken for granted, that the Church was antagonistic to all intellectual progress. The development of scientific research was understood as proving fatal to all the claims of religion. Reason, emancipated from Catholic dogma, was to produce the only right development, for the betterment of human society. There was even heard again the ancient gibe that religion had been a useful opiate for the populace, a serviceable superstition for the unreasoning multitude, to protect the security of established society, in which wealth was in the hands of the few, and the labourers, serfs, or the lower orders were kept in their place by the anodyne of piety. But

as men were to be improved by modern education and introduced to the discoveries of science, so they would be emancipated from the impositions of religion, the oppressive legends of dogmas. This fancy was certainly a wide-spread fashion fifty years ago, and indeed the ignorant opposition of science and religion can still be heard in the popular journals of the second-hand scientists. Among the religious debates of a year or two ago, a prominent divine could be heard impugning the Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation, on the amazing plea that chemical analysis in a laboratory was unable to detect any difference between the wafer of bread before and after sacramental consecration. To such heights of absurdity had the opponents of the Church reached. But it is well to note that now, not only had they become opponents of the Church, but they were even abandoning any intelligent use of the mind. The science of metaphysics was not only unfashionable, it was practically unknown; its name suggesting the Dark Ages, and futile men pursuing of all unpractical things the most incomprehensible. Logic was at a discount, and truths were expressly rejected *because* they were logical. Mathematicians played at disproving the axioms of Euclid, and physical scientists were so little intelligent of their own sphere and principles as to deny the existence of the human soul because it was not quantitatively and chemically discoverable. The decline of the sciences had definitely set in; their differentiations and the nature of their respective subordinations were no longer a matter of interest, and even the varieties of evidence no longer appreciated.

It must soon be known to all how definitely and strenuously the Church and her students stood out from and against that stream of tendency. In some sense it had been true that in the early post-Reformation period her schools of study had perhaps necessarily and wilfully allowed the subjectivist torrent to pass them by. At all events since the Vatican Council her voice had been almost alone in Europe in defending the rights of human reason, in resisting the waywardness and irresponsibility of unscientific theorists masquerading as scientists, in opposing unverified and often unverifiable hypotheses merely calculated to conceal the bankruptcy of all easy substitutes for the truth. Just as she fearlessly corrected the Fideists, the Traditionalists, the Ontologists within her own communion, so she no less boldly condemned the emotional anti-intellectualism of the Modernists. . . . We need not delay here to emphasise what is becoming every year more and more manifest. For anti-Catholic prejudice will die a slow death, but among honest and serious students it is already dying.

It is our chief purpose in this section to indicate the mutual approaches to the human reason and revealed truth, and to point



out how the full responsibilities of the human mind are not only safeguarded but honoured in its assent to the mysterious dogmas of Christ. In this context we seek again the basis or ledge in our intellectual capacity, which can be fully receptive of divine instruction and supernatural information, not only with no derogation or depreciation of the mental qualities of human nature, but even with an unexpected and gratuitous perfecting of those qualities. God revealing will not be God nullifying the intellectual powers he has himself created, but on the contrary endowing them with added light and calling them into activity and to an attainment to which they could of their own nature make no claim.

In the first place it is significant to note how pointedly the Evangelists record the play of human reason in the reaction of his hearers to Christ. Whether the reaction is on the part of hesitating disciples, or of decisive and hostile opponents, it is given its due place in the Gospel accounts of our Lord's public ministry. Perhaps indeed this is most emphasised in the Gospel of St John, the apostle of divine love. He who in Catholic tradition is rightly remembered as the favoured mystic among the immediate followers of Christ, seems to have been particularly concerned to record the questionings, the cross-examinations, the chief objections which plain human reason and clear human thinking offered spontaneously to the actions and words of the incarnate Word of God. No honest reader can fail to enjoy the parry and thrust, the wit and irony, indeed the sarcasm of the man born blind and miraculously healed, when the Pharisees tried to prove to him that the prophet of Nazareth was no man of God but a sinner who broke the sabbath. A more ingenuous statement of the evidence for the miracle it would be difficult to require. 'If he is a sinner I know not. One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see. They said to him: What did he to thee? how did he open thy eyes? He answered them, I have told you already and you have heard. Why would you hear it again? Will you also become his disciples? They reviled him therefore and said: Be thou his disciple, but we are the disciples of Moses. We know that God spoke to Moses: but as to this man we know not from whence he is. The man answered and said to them: Why herein is a wonderful thing, that you know not from whence he is, and he hath opened my eyes. Now we know that God doth not hear sinners, but if a man be a server of God and doth his will, him he heareth. . . . Unless this man were of God, he could not do anything.' (John 9, 25-31). No rationalist could argue more closely or cogently than this mendicant, so fresh a believer. Again in St John's account of our blessed Lord's words to the Samaritan woman at the well, where Christ spoke of the mystical

fount of living water that should spring up into life everlasting, the evangelist is not shy to record the woman's very human, very reasonable, very plain reply: 'Sir, give me this water that I may not thirst nor come hither to draw'. (John 4, 15.) She does not understand the high meaning of his words, but her simple and practical reasoning is effective evidence of a shrewd peasant woman who knows what she wants. But a still better example is when the cultured, educated Pharisee, Nicodemus, voices the clear human reason in his exact reply to the gospel of a divine re-birth: 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can a man enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born again?' (John 3, 4.) At least he understood a material sense in the new Gospel, and to this he offered a sensible and intelligible difficulty. When later, in the sixth chapter of the same Gospel our blessed Lord proclaims the holy sacrament of Communion, the mystery of the Eucharist, St John writes down the obvious rational objection to that wholly supernatural truth, the same objection that was made in the first century of the Church's history, and is substantially the modern objection restated afresh by the anti-Sacramentalists in England today: 'The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying: how can this man give his flesh to eat?' It is evident enough that they understood what he said; and their reply gives clearly the reason why they reject it. He who had created them, understood their reason and equally their unbelief; but he reaffirmed his dogma even more emphatically: 'Amen, Amen, I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you'. And hearing this, even many of his disciples exclaimed: 'This saying is hard and who can hear it?' and leaving him, they walked with him no more.



## ST CATHERINE'S FUND

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# NEW BIBLICAL VERSIONS<sup>1</sup>

BY

REGINALD GINNS, O.P.



THE desire to have Holy Writ put into modern terminology and so made easy of apprehension seems reasonable enough, especially since the past century has brought about such a remarkable revolution in manners of life and thought, a change chiefly notable for its departure from the immemorial customs of our fathers. Consequently we no longer find it easy to understand either the manners or the speech of the past. Add to this the apparent paradox that the easier communication becomes between one people and another, between one part of the world and another, the more narrow-minded and insular we seem to become. The paradox is only apparent, for true internationalism depends not on material conditions but on the things of the mind; aeroplanes and the radio do not necessarily help towards that. Someone has observed that never was the truth so hard to come by as it has been since the invention of wireless communication. Certainly there seems to have been much more true internationalism in the Middle Ages, and even further back in the heyday of Greek culture, when means of travel were difficult and news took years to arrive. Athens had already entered into its decline when, as St Luke says, 'all the Athenians and the strangers that were there employed themselves in nothing else but either in telling or in hearing some new thing'.

One of the reasons for our insularity is that we no longer have that facility for languages other than our own which was formerly so common. When we first read the boast of Roger Bacon that he could teach anyone Greek or Hebrew in a few lessons we smile sceptically; but perhaps our smile condemns us much more than it condemns him. The fact remains that most of us find it hard to read a book profitably in any language but our own, and even books in our mother tongue we like to have written in such a way that the meaning emerges without much thought. Not philosophy alone but everything else we want without tears. Not that we are altogether blameable for this. Education is not what it was, even though its cost today is fabulous in terms of pounds, shillings and

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<sup>1</sup> *La Sainte Bible, traduite en français sous la direction de l'Ecole Biblique de Jerusalem* (Les Editions du Cerf; Blackfriars). The Holy Bible, translated by Ronald A. Knox (Burns Oates; 21s.)

NOTE.—The new French translations may be obtained from *Blackfriars Publications*, Oxford. The prices per volume range from 2s. to 8s.



pence. In the current year the poor British tax-payer is asked to find £250 million for state education, and the estimate for next year adds a further £20 million. But here again it is the material side of education that absorbs most of our efforts, and good buildings are no guarantee of good education.

A parallel sign of the times is the propaganda for the use of the vernacular in the liturgy, a propaganda that can by no means be condemned without consideration. *Sacramenta sunt propter homines*, and we have to deal with man as we find him. In his treatise on the Sacraments St Thomas observes that they are divinely intended for man's benefit in a triple way: they provide us with the essential means of worshipping God; they preserve us from man's perennial inclination to superstition; and finally they *instruct* us about our relationship to God because they are signs. Now instruction, like everything else that has to be communicated, must be received in the way that the recipient can receive it. *Quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur*. It is in the light of the same principle that we ought to judge new versions of the Scriptures. Are they really translations? Are they adapted to the mentality of those for whom they are intended? There are other considerations, of course, but they are only secondary; I mean such considerations as the question of the idiom and literary style of the translation, and it must be admitted that in the Church's tradition these secondary conditions tended to be sacrificed in favour of the primary considerations. We have all heard of the renaissance scholars who refused to say their breviary because it spoilt their Latin style, and perhaps they said the same about the Vulgate.

Not long ago we were presented with a new Latin Psalter which some hope will replace the Latin psalms used by the Church during nearly the whole of her life, and doubtless this foreshadows further efforts to replace all the ancient Vulgate. As in the case of the Knox version of the New Testament, the new Psalter gave rise to criticism which at times became somewhat acrimonious; but no one who remembers the history of the Bible will find anything surprising in that. The justest and most damaging criticism so far made against the new Psalter is that offered by L. Bouyer in *La Maison Dieu* (No. 14, 1948). While admitting that the Hebrew text has been *admirablement établi et interprété par l'Institut Biblique*, he condemns the translation from the literary point of view as being no recognisable form of Latin literature, neither Ciceronian nor ecclesiastical. He means by ecclesiastical the language of the Latin Fathers, of the Roman liturgy, of the Psalter itself in the form used by the Church for so many centuries; it is not classical Latin, but it is none the less a language that has its beauties and is well

adapted to serve its purpose. Moreover it has the advantage of being in a certain sense a living language on account of its long usage in the Church. Whereas the language of the new Psalter is neither a living nor a dead language; '*c'est une langue qui n'a jamais existé comme langue*'. It is the sort of Latin we learnt to write at school, and it was called 'good Latin' when we kept the rules of grammar and syntax, but it was none the less a purely artificial language. Bouyer, therefore, and many of us will agree readily with him, regrets that the new Psalter has neglected what may be called the classical Latin of the Church. Here might well have been applied the saying of a wise man: when it is not necessary to change, it is necessary not to change. The occasion for such a change might never have arisen if, as the venerable Père Lagrange used to say, the commission set up to revise the Vulgate text some half century ago had not limited its labours merely to the task of reconstituting the original text of St Jerome, but had gone on to make the corrections which modern biblical scholarship had shown to be both possible and necessary.

However there is much to be said for the slowness and conservatism of the Church in the matter of biblical translations, and the recent discovery of the old Hebrew MSS of the Bible confirms this view. In the April number of the *Revue Biblique* there is an article in which the author discusses the value of these MSS and the various opinions of the palaeographical experts. Some think they date from the second century B.C., others put them a century later, others again assign them to about 100 A.D. According to one opinion they cannot be earlier than the twelfth century A.D., while some declare that they are forgeries. The author finds it *impossible de se prononcer d'une façon ferme sur la date probable de nos manuscrits*; but he goes on to pronounce firmly that the style of writing leads him to assign them to the Herodian epoch, therefore at the earliest to the latter half of the first century B.C. He wrote too soon, for further investigations at the place of discovery made it necessary to add a postscript which confounds most of the critics and the experts. As was pointed out in the *Times* of 9 August by G. Lankester Harding, who is in charge of the investigations, it may now be taken as certain that the MSS are more than a thousand years older than any Hebrew text of the Bible previously known, the oldest dated copy being the Leningrad MSS of the Prophets written in 916 A.D. None of them is later than the beginning of the first century B.C. and some of them are probably much older. So the Church is not so unreasonable as she might seem in hesitating to give official sanction to new translations, seeing that any day a new discovery may throw much needed light on what

is at present obscure. Experienced biblical scholars use the same prudence when, in dealing with obscurities of the sacred text, they bid us not to sacrifice a difficult reading for the sake of a facile emendation; the difficult reading is likely to be the correct one. We do not yet know the full extent of the recent discovery since there has been much secrecy observed; but it may be that among the MSS there will be found an ancient copy of the Psalms which may necessitate changes in the new Psalter. Nothing is so confusing for the faithful as frequent changes in the sacred text. It was for this reason that St Jerome made his first revision of the Latin version of the New Testament with so light a hand, at the same time bitterly complaining of the facile way in which unpractised hands had dealt with the Scriptures. *Exemplaria scripturarum toto orbe dispersa . . . inter se variant. Tot sunt paene quot codices.* And the reason is that they are *vel a vitiosis interpretibus male edita, vel a praesumptoribus imperitis emendata perversius, vel a librariis dormitantibus aut addita sunt aut mutata.*

St Jerome would, it seems to me, welcome with approval *La Sainte Bible traduite en Français sous la direction de l'Ecole Biblique de Jérusalem.* It may be said in the first place that this is no production of hasty work or undigested scholarship. The Ecole Biblique has to its credit more than fifty years of continual study and research, and as far as I know this is the first time it has put its hand to the work of producing a new translation of the Bible. Nor is it the work of one man, for no one man seems sufficient for such a task. A team of translators and revisors has been gathered from among eminent French biblical scholars and literary men, and the first results of the enterprise fulfil the promise held out by such a prudent scheme. The work is published in small fascicules by the well-known *Editions du Cerf*, and already there have appeared seven containing Mark (Huby, S.J.), Luke (Osty, P.S.S.), Macchabees (Abel, O.P.), Ecclesiastes (Pautrel, S.J.), Ezechiel (Auvray, Oratorian), Aggeus, Zacharius and Malachias (Gelin, P.S.S.), and the Epistles to the Corinthians (Osty, P.S.S.). It will be objected that there can be no literary unity in a work of this kind. But why should there be? The sooner we get rid of the idea that the Bible is a book the better. It is not a book but a library; its authors were spread over a period of at least 1,300 years, and the matter treated of in its various books deals with such a diversity of subjects as history, law, ethics, poetry, religion and drama.

The text of this translation is not broken up in verses but into paragraphs according to the sense, with titles descriptive of the subject inset in heavy type. Textual references are placed in the margin and there are numerous explanatory notes at the foot of



the page. One criticism may here be offered, namely that the text is over-encumbered with signs indicative of versification and notes. Thus the first four verses of Luke are marked with seven such signs to the detriment of straightforward reading. Verse figures might have been put alongside the text, and the intelligent reader will not need to be reminded to look at the foot of the page for notes. Each book is preceded by an introductory essay dealing with the sacred author and the character and purpose of his book, all done in excellent style. Indeed the whole work promises to fulfil a long-felt need on the part of the Catholic student and layman. As for the application of the above mentioned principle according to which we ought to judge the value of the translation, namely its fidelity to the original and its adaptability to the mentality of the general reader, it seems to me that it easily passes the test. It deserves to be called a translation and not a free paraphrase. No liberties are taken with the sacred text in an endeavour to produce a fine French style which is not the style of the author, an endeavour which always runs the risk of sacrificing substance for the sake of accidental form. Indeed, as it has been wisely said, 'the problem confronting every translator is the choice of sacrifice, because all translation implies some loss'. Hence the Italian proverb, *Traduttori traditori*. No one felt this more strongly than Dante who, in the *Convivio*, warns us that no literature can be changed from one language to another without shattering all its sweetness and harmony; and that, he says, is why Homer, 'the monarch of sublimest song' has never been turned from Greek into Latin up to his time.

Still there is no reason why a man should not seek his own and others' advantage by trying to express idiomatically in his own mother tongue the thoughts of some ancient classic. Most of us have tried it at one time or another, whether for our own amusement or under the compulsion of the school-master. This is what Monsignor Knox has now done for us with the Old Testament, half of which he has recently presented to the public in a new English dress, modestly inviting criticism. With equal modesty he warns the reader that it is in no sense what we are accustomed to call an authorised translation, even though it bears the *imprimatur* of the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster and was undertaken at his request, as the title page informs us. In the fine dedication he claims no more for himself than the title of *indignus interpres*. But while manifesting such a becoming modesty he is ready to lay aside the garments of humility in order to deal with those who make criticisms of his work that seem to him foolish and inept, as one may see in the little book recently published under the title *Englishing the Bible*. He has thoughtfully adopted his standpoint and is

prepared to defend it vigorously. To those who object that his manner of translating is untraditional he replies that he could not agree with them more completely. Has he not said from the start that he does not wish to be traditional in the sense of translating after the manner of his predecessors? 'There is no official translation of the Bible known to me', he wrote in the *Clergy Review* of February 1940, 'which does not abandon from the start the dream of preserving its native idiom, which does not resign itself from the start to being a word-for-word translation'. And this he says not merely of Catholic but also of Protestant official translations. With no undue modesty he here declares that this latest work 'gives my idea of how the Old Testament ought to be translated'. It is a brave claim for any man to make, especially in view of the weight of tradition behind the contrary opinion.

Critics of his work naturally fall into three classes: the traditionalists, especially those who like the taste of the old phraseology to which they have grown accustomed by long use; those who pass judgment on the literary style of Monsignor Knox; and lastly, the biblical experts.

The last named are disarmed by the translator's frank avowal that he does not 'prejudge the question whether the mind of the sacred authors is accurately and fully represented'. On the contrary he invites their help. On this point it seems necessary to say that one reviewer has done Monsignor Knox no service in writing that the translator 'has made it plain that he does not intend to preserve a *faithful* rendering of the original texts'. If the rendering is not faithful, then what we have is not the Bible but something new and foreign to the mind of the sacred authors. Surely faithful in Mgr Knox's context means that word-for-word translation which he has rejected from the start, in favour of the attempt to express in English idiom what a writer said two or three thousand years ago in Hebrew idiom. Most of the literary critics agree, and have said in a flattering manner, that he has succeeded here in a way that perhaps none of his contemporaries could hope to rival. Whether those of us who are less literary will show an equal welcome to the new translation still remains to be seen. At any rate the generality of the Catholic laity will have no reason to object to it because it differs so remarkably from the Douay Version, since as a rule they are not noticeably familiar with the style of the Douay Old Testament. When Protestants accuse Catholics of not reading the Bible they mean the Old Testament, for which they have always shown a great predilection. An old convert of mine used to remark that his former Protestant colleagues were Old Testament Christians. So if Monsignor Knox's translation succeeds

in persuading Catholics to read their Old Testament we shall be gainers all round. And those who do not like his style need not read it, since his translation is published 'for private use only'. They can always return to the Douay. Unless I am mistaken, this is what has happened in the case of the New Testament translation; many have tried it and returned to the Douay.

But there is no need to be surprised if this is the case. St Jerome was well aware of how traditional we all are in matters of this kind. When at the request of Pope Damasus he undertook the work of revising the Latin text of the New Testament, his first difficulty was which of the Latin texts in use he should adopt as exemplar; there were almost as many versions as copies, for as he complains, 'whenever a Greek codex came into any person's hands and he thought he had sufficient knowledge of the two languages he ventured to make a translation'. Eventually he made up his mind which of the versions was the least reprehensible, but even then 'to avoid any great discrepancy from the Latin we are accustomed to read, I have used my pen with restraint'. So while correcting the passages which gave a manifestly false rendering of the Greek original, he allowed the rest to remain as they were despite their imperfections. He used the same moderation sometimes in his work on the Old Testament when producing a fresh translation into Latin from the Hebrew.

It might be objected, however, that there are limits to what ought to be done in making allowances for traditional sentiment, and perhaps Monsignor Knox feels that the limits have been reached and passed. Certainly the history of St Jerome seems to indicate that he might have done better work had he not been so much hindered by such considerations as well as by the objections of his antagonists.



## RECITING DIVINE OFFICE

BY

J. C.



IN March 1946 the editors of *La Vie Spirituelle* printed a questionnaire relative to the recitation of the Divine Office. In January 1947 under the title 'Lauda Jerusalem Dominum' they published a summary of the 345 answers received. These were from priests, nuns and the laity most, though not all, of whom were tertiaries. While in most cases replies showed great attachment to the practice, comments on the length and language of the Office—as well as on the attitude of mind of many recitants raise some interesting problems. It was also seen that despite the goodwill shown towards their obligation (priests) or practice (laity), many were far from understanding the Church's end in establishing this. The book therefore includes a valuable chapter, 'Towards a better understanding of the Office', setting forth the origin, history and purpose of the breviary and another on the question of Latin.

The editor of 'Lauda Jerusalem Dominum' confesses his difficulty in summarising and arranging the many varied and often contradictory replies. There rarely seemed a 'type' answer to any question. All were individual and interesting. The present writer, also, apologises for omissions and choice of selections necessitated by space in this further condensation. Those interested would do well to buy the book and read it for themselves<sup>1</sup>. Besides the answers and the chapters referred to above there is valuable reading on the prayer of praise and the liturgical year.

The majority of priests assert their devotion to the obligation of reciting the Office. From members of Orders who habitually recite (or chant) it in choir replies were usually simple and straightforward. They find the greatest satisfaction in their Office as communal and choral prayer. Thus performed it cements community life and encourages fraternal charity and reinforces in the priest an awareness of his peculiar function as link between God and man.

In comments of the secular clergy we find much variety and many interesting suggestions. For many the breviary is a joy and consolation, a fount of spiritual refreshment and a pledge of union with God. Others speak of the freedom which they find in this particular obedience and the perfection of the prayers in the sanctifying of each day of the liturgical year. 'I love my Office and thank the Church for having imposed it upon her priests', writes one.

Despite this, the majority of secular priests find full recitation

<sup>1</sup> Obtainable from Blackfriars, Oxford, price 2s.

a burden among their multifarious duties. Some consider it unsuitable for solitary recitation. Most wish it was shorter and more intelligible. The Vulgate text is sometimes obscure and in some cases even untranslatable. This makes it for many an almost intolerable burden. Read mechanically and dutifully by such, it has no devotional appeal and occupies time desired for private prayer. These consider life liturgically inspired by this means, a beautiful, unrealisable ideal. 'The breviary is for life, not life for the breviary', writes the outspoken professor of a seminary who calls for sweeping changes if the book is to be of effective use. Others consider that too much time is given in training priests in the mode of recitation and too little to the spiritual content. Many who wish to 'pray' the Office, pausing before some fruitful passage, find that choral recitation or the exigencies of parochial duties (seculars) prevents this. From this arises the suggestion that the obligation should be not one of total hours but of *time* spent in recitation, duly safeguarded by obligations of conscience as to degree of attention, 'pronunciation' etc., 'for the benefit of those who wish to pray rather than to recite prayers'.

One priest argues that the total volume of prayer rising from the Church is what matters and that individual contributions should be shortened and simplified. Younger men, he states, have not the physique of the old country curés who rose at five o'clock to say Matins and Lauds before a seven o'clock or earlier Mass. He considers that time spent over Office interferes with apostolic efforts and participation with the laity in Catholic Action. He, like many, is opposed to anticipation of hours but admits that in modern circumstances this is a deplorable necessity. 'Early to bed and early to rise', the sole principle by which Office can be recited at the appropriate times, would only widen the already wide gap between the priest and his people.

*Quamprimum* is generally deplored. Saying hours at the proper times, as far as possible, is found to be more fruitful. Office spread over the day keeps the recitants in the presence of God, and gives a sense of elasticity and leisure; *il ne faut pas être pressé avec le Bon Dieu*. It encourages detachment from worldly affairs and helps the priest to become first and foremost a man of prayer, servant of God and the Church. One curé recites his office aloud in his church at the appropriate times beginning with Matins and Lauds between six and seven, followed by half an hour's private meditation on one of the lessons. He finds that the two to two and a half hours *à cette psalmodie* well spent and no loss to his parochial duties. A monk makes the suggestion that the nocturns of Matins should be separated and said at intervals. He considers that a short

time for prayer 'ten times a day' would be physically and mentally less exhausting than a solid block of recitation.

Most agree that the psalms are difficult to understand. Those, and they are many, who deliberately set themselves to study their meaning and application have found this a task infinitely worth the undertaking. Others, not so painstaking, confess their bewilderment over too many passages. While a few speak gratefully of training in understanding the breviary received in their particular seminaries, too many consider that the devotional aspect is neglected for the historic side. All are agreed that after ordination the priest should continue biblical and patristic studies and read commentaries on the psalms to prevent staleness but many speak of the difficulty of obtaining such books. One such complaint comes from Canada. The new psalter is approved by the few who seem to have seen it.

While secular priests are free in theory to distribute the hours over the day, their usual resort is to a *blocage* not usually desired. From the monks come many regrets for anticipation, especially of Compline recited in the middle of the day. A Dominican considers that hours of study would be more fruitful if interrupted at regular intervals for the day hours.

Pleas for the vernacular come not only from priests with insufficient Latin for their own needs. They come from many, good scholars themselves, who consider rather the benefit to the Church if priests and people could recite Office together in the mother tongue. Many secular clergy sigh for common recitation with fellow-priests or alternatively for an office adapted to solitary recitation.

The falling off (in France) of attendance at the once popular parochial Vespers is attributed not only to modern secular trends but to a lack of understanding by the faithful of words and ceremonies. A vernacular liturgy combined with instruction is recommended as a step to renewing the old custom.

Replies from nuns touch a more personal set of problems, chiefly devotional or concerned with Latin. There is a general desire from those who recite the little Office of Our Lady that this might be replaced by the Divine Office, if only for Octaves, Sundays and feasts. Nuns are generally against *blocage*, as are the secular clergy. They are unanimously in favour of the psalms, finding in them spiritual food and their link with the universal Church.

While nuns of certain teaching orders deplore their inadequate training in understanding the breviary during novitiate, contemplatives speak gratefully of having received this. The latter say that their understanding deepens with the years as the often repeated words weld themselves into their lives.



Ignorance of Latin is often acknowledged usually with deep regret. Nevertheless a few consider the lack as an advantage by giving them a 'sense' of the Office which detailed knowledge of the words would, they feel, somehow destroy. One finds total ignorance very restful. Nevertheless very few would prefer the vernacular, the majority favouring Latin recitation with a translation under their eyes for reference. Nuns do not care for the new psalter nor, unlike the priests, do they wish for alterations in the breviary. Their conservatism in these matters is traced to devotion to the traditions of their respective orders and to the sense which the present form of the Office gives them of being in touch with the whole Church.

'Le Latin est langue sacrale, une langue vulgaire donnerait à l'Office une caractère profane', writes one. However, one or two would like the lessons and the homilies in the vernacular. One suggests Latin for public, the vernacular for private recitation.

The nuns are overwhelmingly aware that the Office should be prayed and be prepared for by prayer and study. They prefer recitation in choir to private. To contemplatives the Office is, after the Mass, their greatest joy. Members of active orders do not, especially in convents 'bien réglée', in general find Office a burden but rather a time of rest and refreshment which fortifies them for their work and for the difficulties of community life. Their replies show them to have real understanding of the aims and purpose of the liturgy.

Replies received from 110 lay persons are interesting and varied. For the laity the burning problem is that of time. How to fit Divine Office or even the Little Office (which the majority recite) into an already full day? Many of them speak of the fatigue, physical and mental, which the task engenders but never with the least regret.

Not being bound by vow to full recitation, the laity do not resort to *blocage* of hours. These they usually disperse throughout the day, though many can only manage a portion in the morning and evening. The varied horaries are interesting, some taking an odd quarter of an hour as occasion arises, others having regular short periods of 'rest and refreshment with God' as they are usually found to be even in the most unpromising circumstances. Thus hours are said in buses, trains and quiet corners of cafés. The time taken for all the hours at intervals is usually estimated at two to two and a half hours.

Some say Prime, Vespers and Compline regularly, others the day hours only. Matins is usually considered too long unless it is that of the Little Office. This is the Office usually said though many would prefer the Divine Office. One who had the habit of rising in the small hours to say Lauds had to abandon the practice. An

obliterate the time when her children were at meals to say the day hours.

Tertiaries frequently find the Little Office too monotonous and regret that it does not follow the liturgical year. Sometimes these substitute the Divine Office entirely while many recite this on Sundays and feasts. Others make an ingenious amalgamation of the two, e.g. Vespers, Compline and Prime from the Breviary as the simplest solution. Others adventurously 'compose' an office to suit themselves. This is not favoured by the editor who, while applauding the good intention considers the practice capricious and the element of personal choice contrary to the spirit of the Church.

Some enthusiasts make parts of the Office a family institution with success. Children delight in family Vespers and/or Compline. Such parents bring their children up liturgically and encourage short psalms for morning prayers and teach them the *Magnificat* or the *Benedictus*. Some families say the entire Office together on Saturday and Sunday.

One correspondent suggests that there should be Catholic broadcasts of family Compline on Sunday which could be chanted at home. Many persons living alone long for a 'gathering of two or three' with whom to recite Office. Few families have a chapel and praying seems to be done mainly in 'la chambre de Maman'.

Approach to the Office by the laity seems generally to begin with the Little Office (tertiaries). Other factors have been, proximity to a Benedictine monastery, Catholic Action groups, including scouts, days of Christian Recollection and the Society of the Magnificat (Belgium). Many deplore lack of instruction in the psalms in Catholic schools. An Englishwoman writes that doctrine, too often desiccated in instruction, comes alive in the psalms. A converted Jew sees, in knowledge and understanding of the psalms, a hope for the conversion of Israel and a blow to anti-semitism.

A small minority are bewildered by the psalms but the majority speak movingly of the benefit given by these to their spiritual lives of which they are the foundation, the strength and repose. Space forbids quoting even a few of the beautiful tributes which men and women, married and single, pay to the psalms. Their nobility and beauty, their appropriateness to all times and moods are stressed as is the fact that they were above all the prayer of our Lord. This personal attachment seems emphasised more by nuns and the laity than by priests, whose replies on the whole are more concerned with intellectual problems of arrangement and recitation.

Some, pressed for time or opportunity, try to pray in the spirit of each hour, regularly and at the appropriate times. Many do biblical studies, based on the daily lessons. An Englishwoman

makes a plea for leaflets such as the Bible Reading Fellowship of the Church of England produces, but following the daily lessons and with reference to the liturgical year.

The question of language is important for the laity. The majority understand Latin badly or not at all. Many use a translation entirely, some do on alternate days. This seems a favoured practice by those who love Latin and hope to become familiar with it in time. Some who habitually use Latin resort to a translation in times of fatigue or hurry.

The topic of vernacular services in Church raised 'heated polemics' which are not given. All admit the necessity for a working knowledge of Church Latin. One tertiary wrote sadly that 'in Senegambia even the lowest classes of negroes take the trouble to learn Arabic in order to read the Koran'.

While most tertiaries cling to the form of Office enjoined by their rule, many feel that this cuts them off from the main stream of the Church's prayer. Some make use of a shortened breviary designed for the laity such as that published by the American Benedictines (*A Shorter Breviary, Volksbrevier, Laienbrevier*, etc.). There is also a fairly general desire for an 'official' office specially composed for the needs of a twentieth century laity. This the editor deplores as being due to a total misunderstanding of the aims of the Church. The Divine Office is, he asserts, the prayer of the *Christian people* presided over by the hierarchy and participated in by the people. He refrains from publishing details of the varied plans for 'improving' the liturgy and contents himself with saying that these show genuine love of the psalms, the scriptures and a liturgical life.

Falling off in attendance at parochial Vespers is traced to the growth of atheism and modern trends in favour of amusements, secular gatherings, lack of understanding of language and ceremony, paid choirs and florid music. An unsympathetic attitude of the clergy to lay participation in the service is also referred to. 'La paroisse apparait aux fidèles comme une organisation administrative et non comme maison de prière.' Where the priest is sympathetic and zealous parish Vespers retain their popularity.

There is also a suggestion that nuns might play a part in instructing the laity in the meaning of and procedure at ceremonies. They might also by saying certain parts of the Office aloud in the church (always with permission of the parish priest) encourage the participation of the faithful in such hours as Prime, Vespers and Compline. Many of the laity regret that priests do not in sermons give the public any inkling of the treasure which remains locked from them between the pages of the breviary.



## MARTIN DE PORRES

BY

VIOLET CLIFTON



MARTIN'S father was irked by Martin's lowly profession and the friars agreed with Don Juan that Martin, being lettered and well versed in medicine as well, should be received as a brother-professed.

But because of his humility Martin would not agree to become even a lay-brother, and he never rose above the degree of a donator, a tertiary. The only privilege to which, some fifteen years later, he joyfully assented was to be allowed to take the solemn vows for life whilst he remained a tertiary: this was indeed a rare privilege. During the whole of his religious life Martin wore a white habit with a black *cappa* or cloak.

That many-sided humility of Martin, I see it thus. I see it in its least spiritual part as resulting from Martin's probable self-disgust at being, in his flesh, the result of fornication—'Is it not enough that you are mulatto, must you also be a thief?' he will cry in reproach to his sister. And in this lesser part his humility was a shield needed against vanity for if many called Martin 'dog of a mulatto' so also many called him 'Son of a noble Spaniard', 'Friend of the Archbishop', and later 'Friend of the Viceroy'.

And in its higher part this humility surely resulted from the grace Martin had whereby he saw men as souls moving, and revered them for their formal or their eternal essence.

And Martin's special grace it was to see his nothingness in relation to the allness of God, and to tremble at the awful disparity between his soul and God.

\* \* \* \*

Don Lorenzano is harassed by the needs of the sick of the Community, the money at his disposal is not sufficient. And Martin, on his knees before the Father Provincial, cries out excitedly, 'May I tell your Paternity of a plan I have thought of by which the sum required, it is not very big, can be found?' 'What is it that you propose, my son?' 'That you sell me for a slave. I shall fetch a good price because I am strong: I shall at last have served the brothers. Lay labour here is not enough to give me right to the food I eat. I need a master who shall treat me as I deserve instead of with benignity.'

Don Lorenzano answered, 'I judge that we shall be best served by keeping you so in obedience, Martin; no more of this idea'.

And at another time Don Lorenzano found a wounded Indian

labourer in Martin's own cell. And he punished Martin because he had already forbidden the mulatto to hide the sick. Martin suffered the punishment in silence. And afterwards the Provincial sent for him and asked Porres why he set his orders at naught thereby violating holy obedience. Martin, humble but eager, answered, 'Because I cannot understand how charity can take a second place. Will Your Paternity explain to me if obedience does indeed rank before charity?'

\* \* \* \*

The pink flowering creeper called *bellissima*, most beautiful, hung scentless in the quiet air of the monastic enclosure, a fountain sparkled and rippled, when suddenly the peace was shattered by the angry voices of two students. Instead of pondering the divine obscurity or musing over the Dionysian names of God, the one asserted with a shout the predominance of the essence of God, the other with an oath ascribed a greater glory to God's existence.

Martin de Porres was passing across the court and paused and said, 'Dear children, to our poor mortal knowledge there can be no conception greater than that of the divine existence because that one conception contains the Being of the I-That-Am. And this is what the angelic dove taught.'

And afterwards Master Francis of the Cross, their teacher of theology, told those students that the mind of Martin was infused by the science of the Saints.

\* \* \* \*

Often in pictures and statues (alas! too often they will not satisfy any canon of art) Martin de Porres has been and will be shown holding a broom; he is the infirmarian but carrying a basket full of rats and mice.

Marcelo de Ribera, for fifty years a friend of Martin, was the chief witness at the Trials on the occasion imaged by these representations. The event happened in this way, or nearly enough.

It was the day of the week when Martin carried baskets of fresh coverings to the infirmary; he was very tender to the sick, he would warm their garments over a brazier, sweeten them with rosemary and fold them away with herbs. But on this day he saw some of the clothing frayed and soiled by mice.

The friars had complained of late of the rats and mice. 'In the kitchen, in the store-room, the mulatto is to blame. He teaches gentleness to the cat so that the mouse no longer fears to eat from the dish which the dog and the cat are sharing. The cat should be left hungry so as to return to her useful hunting. Martin quite overturns the natural order.'

A father, angered by these new ways, set a trap in the linen room,

and now behind its osier bars Martin saw the small imprisoned creature.

Martin was unaware that Marcelo de Ribera was in this linen room. Marcelo, from his vantage, saw Martin take up the osier trap and heard him say to the mouse: 'Thou and thy friends do much harm but I shall not kill thee. I shall free thee. And then thou must call thy kin to the bottom of the vegetable garden. I shall bring food every day and leave it at the far boundary of the garden. But none of you must enter the courtyards or buildings of the convent.'

The people of Lima told each other the tale in various ways—some had it that Martin had carried the rats away from the Rosary; his charity 'to creatures without reason' stirred their wonder.

\* \* \* \*

Into my mind comes the saying of some saint; was it Augustine of Hippo or another?

'The work of the Word is the word for us.' And seeing rose and rainbow I was glad of the saying for it added great glory to the rose and to the rainbow. But then logic whispered: 'If rose then also rat, *all* the works or else *none* of the works are the expressions of the Word'.

Martin de Porres and Rose of Lima (it seems that they never met) both of them elucidate that saying. Each of them was blessed with the 'single eye' that fills the whole body with light. In that light: 'Thy creature they be'. Thy creature rose and rat—each one, every one, is seen to be good.

\* \* \* \*

Of course the holy, wonder-working and moneyless Martin was freed of many limitations as for instance those of time and of place. He healed, he foresaw, he duplicated his presence, he was levitated because his 'love was his weight'. Animals were sensible to the meaning of Martin, and he, or angels at his beck, quelled the flooded river Runiac for created things are not impenetrable to their Maker. But when the friars talked of such things Don Lorenzani would say: 'You are beguiled by wonders. Ponder the greatest wonder of all—and the cause of all—the love of Brother Martin for God. Look behind the prodigies to the love.'

\* \* \* \*

By day and by night Martin de Porres strove in ways in accord with his genius for the purification of love, for that *instant of pure love* to come about, of which John of the Cross was just at this time speaking, 'Such an instant is more precious in the sight of God and more profitable to the Church than all other good works put together though it may seem as though nothing were done.'



For years Porres trained and pruned the natural so that the supernatural might flower, then one morning with a sudden shock he experienced the obduracy of the flesh, knew how it remains lustful, choosing this, rejecting that, not attuned to holy detachment, quite unfit for the light of glory.

This was the event: a man in the infirmary was very sick, Porres was to nurse him. Some disgusting liquid drawn from the dropsical man was in a vessel at the sufferer's side; so offensive was it that Martin shuddered. Then he must have realised his lack of love which now became subordinate to the niceness of his senses. And because he had shuddered away from his brother instead of having yearned with pity towards him, Martin seized the glass left by the surgeon and drained it for his own correction.

\* \* \* \*

I like some of the sayings of Martin. He made a pleasure ground which I have seen in Lima, called *Las Amank'ais* because he planted it all gold with the *amaryllis aurea*. Martin said, 'Men seeing the flowers will praise God'.

He used herbs for the sick and he had a great belief in water; some of those that survived him had heard him say often, 'Water does that illness good'. He cared very greatly for animals; he begged Juanna to set aside a room for those he was tending. 'I will take thy creatures', said Juanna. 'The creature is of God', corrected Martin. 'Little red sister', he called the tabby cat when he tied on her bandage with a pretty bow; and brother-bull and brother-dog, and he had much pleasure with such creatures and taught them and healed them.

I like Martin's words when the sore filthy fellow that he had laboured for in his cell and lain on the sheets was roughly taken away. Seeing him carried away, and being himself sharply punished for adopting the festering stranger, Porres cried out, 'Soap and water will wash the sheets but only bitter tears can cleanse the stain of cruelty from the soul'.

He said a mysterious thing to Juan vas Quez, a poor boy who for years freely used Martin's cell as his. Only Juan knew of the terrible self-discipline of Martin and that three times in the course of the twenty-four hours he scourged himself with three chains and cruel rosettes of metal. 'The bad thoughts are three', Martin said to Juan.

This Juan who witnessed Martin's penances said at the Trials that of all the people he had ever met Martin was the most happy. He told how the Saint once romped in a field with a couple of calves. Juan was frightened by the rough play and he called out

to Martin to stop. 'Oh, let me play with them', Martin called back, 'I have not been so merry since I was a child.'

I like what Martin said to a friar who was shocked to see the mulatto pray with eyes tight closed. He was kneeling before a statue of our Lady which the Conquistadores had heaped with treasure. 'Fray Martin, why shut your eyes against the glory of our Lady? Her coronet, her emeralds and her silk, her tassels and her girdle should remind you of the glory of the Queen of the Angels—yes, even of the magnificence of God.' Martin answered, 'Fray, of that splendour I am aware. But whilst I pray I have no need of eyes nor of looking. Behind the lowered lids I can behold all that I believe.'

At the Trial the friar who told that story added, 'Martin we all knew was aware of God: often Martin was in ecstasy'.

\* \* \* \*

And then in 1639 Martin de Porres put away the clothing he had worn to rags and dressed himself in a new habit and went about his work fresh and as if in festival spirit. The brothers thought that he did this because they knew that the Archbishop had invited Martin to accompany him to Mexico but the dusky-one answered, 'I am wearing this habit for my death', and very soon afterwards Martin was stricken with his last illness. The death of Martin was an act of beauty; the infirmarian, Antonio, offered Porres a draught mixed with the blood of pigeons and that of small dogs because the physician said that this compound would give Martin strength. Porres said, refusing the potion, 'Holy Providence has decreed that I shall die; do not kill these creatures to waste their blood'. Antonio wept at that. 'My little angel, why weep?' The young friar answered, 'Because you are my father and my life and you say that you will die of this fever. You have helped me in life and loved me, but will you love me after death?' Martin answered, 'Maybe I shall profit you far more than now'.

Martin wept for his sins, his nothingness, for the hours that he thought he had wasted: 'I should suffer more; I wish I might suffer more'. And when, at his last hour, he knew that an African, his head full of lice, sat within the gate asking for comfort, Martin moaned often and murmured to himself, 'Where now Martin is your charity?' and, 'Can it be you will leave him unkempt?'

Count de Chinchon, the Viceroy, came to the door of the cell leaving those that accompanied him at the gates of the monastery. He knew the cell for he had visited it several times to ask some guidance from the mulatto. He waited for half an hour because Martin, who was in ecstasy, had given a sign that no one must

enter. When the door was opened Count de Chichou went in and kissed the hand of Fray Martin.

But when the Viceroy had left the Prior reproved Martin angrily for having allowed his majesty of Spain to wait at the door of his cell. Martin said nothing and Don Lorenzana ordered him under obedience to explain this lack of respect. Pointing towards where the altar lamp of the church was shining the dying man said, 'My Lady Mary and my Father Dominic, Vincent Ferrer and other Saints with angels too were by me. With visitors so holy I had no power to receive any other.'

Then came the mystery of a bitter secret struggle with the power of darkness and afterwards, the friars being with him in the cell, Martin asked each one pardon for the scandal he often had given. Then taking a crucifix Martin died kissing the wounds of Christ.

The rose-filled vales of Persia are no more fragrant than was the church where Martin's body lay. Before he died a friend embracing him had sensed the sweetness of that overwhelming fragrance of roses.

In the church packed with people Cipriano de Medina, the Dominican, cried out in a loud voice of despair a rebuke to the dead man, 'Martin why art thou all untouched, so cold, though all these covers have come to thine honouring?' At that demand the heart of the brother quickened, his body became pliant, the blood glowed again in the dark flesh. Martin lay lapped in fragrance—all debonair in death.

\* \* \* \*

Later at the Trials the witnesses will be asked: 'Can you swear that after the death of Martin de Porres many came and kissed his hands and his feet? Can you swear that after death his body was seen as gay, as beautiful as it had been during life? Was it also for this cause that men and women kissed him, honouring him as a saint? Did great ones of the land, Viceroy, Archbishop and Governor, carry his body to burial?'

'Since Martin's death has God allowed at his intercession cures and miracles worked in Martin's name? Are these things of the people's common knowledge, spread about and believed?'



## CORRESPONDENCE

Sir,—In reply to X's article on 'The Family Spirit' I am taking it for granted that having mentioned 'a remarkable renaissance of the contemplative spirit' she is writing from the point of view of contemplative orders.

If this is the case there is probably a larger proportion of converts than one normally expects to find in teaching orders. These converts not only have no Catholic background or training, but they are generally considerably older than the postulant who is born a Catholic. All their education will have tended to emphasise their individuality and they have not that realisation of themselves as members of the Mystical Body which in the born Catholic produces an entirely different conception of her relationship with others.

Furthermore, they suffer under a disadvantage which is inevitable but not always sufficiently recognised. I refer to the fact that during the process of conversion the subject has passed through a period of intense introspection and concentration upon her own problem. When she realises her vocation to the religious life, her immediate reaction is the thought that in the convent she will be able to continue her personal quest for God free from distraction and hindrance. She does not come to the convent with the idea of pursuing her ideal in common with others, and is disconcerted to find that she is expected to subordinate her personality to community life. Perhaps if it were impressed upon her even before her entry into religion that in the convent she has less importance as an isolated individual than as part of the community, she would develop in time 'the family spirit'. I speak, I admit, in ignorance. For all I know that may be the first thing she is taught; but I find it difficult to believe that any soul of good will, whatever her upbringing, can be so wrapped up in her own personality as to be quite unable to fit in with the general scheme once it is explained to her by someone who sees her problem clearly.

Do superiors realise sufficiently the cause of her self-absorption? It is not necessarily sheer self-centredness in the ordinary sense, but may only be the result of an intense preoccupation with her often quite recent conversion and a great desire to 'get to God quickly'. She is apt to look upon the community as ministering to her own special advancement. So it is, but not in the way she thinks.

I believe 'the family spirit' is very much alive today, which is probably why so many people are anxious to join Third Orders and other Aggregations. They want to belong to a family and this feeling is quite different from the gregarious instinct that makes people want to do things in droves.—Yours etc.,

Y.

## REVIEWS

ELECTED SILENCE: The Autobiography of Thomas Merton. (Hollis & Carter; 15s.)

The Catholic reader will take up this volume, the autobiography of a young American Cistercian, with great interest and perhaps a little surprise, for the writing of autobiographies is not the customary labour of Cistercian monks. To justify such a breach of the spirit of monastic silence there is naturally demanded something more than common interest or literary achievement. There must be something of supernatural value, serving an apostolic purpose and leading souls back to God. It is the claim of this review that the book is justified on these grounds.

General and wide interest there certainly is, and the writer is gifted with an easy, natural style that rarely fails, and at times achieves literary excellence. There are granted revealing glimpses of life in America, France and England. The provincial French Lycée is compared with the English preparatory and public school. Cambridge is placed side by side with American university life. Communism is exposed among the students on the campus of Columbia. The reader witnesses again the pre-war years and early years of the war from the far side of the Atlantic. Passages occur of great beauty and human appeal, for example the tribute to a holy French family in the Auvergne, the candid confession of the callous way he treated his young brother, John Paul, supplemented at the end of the book by the passage telling of John Paul's visit to Gethsemani, his reception into the Church, and finally his gallant death in the North Sea. Among the finest pages in the book are those describing his unconscious pilgrimage in Rome. Among the saddest are those that tell of his father's illness and death, with his own reaction to the enigma of human pain in days when he had no faith.

But we approach nearer to the purpose of the book when we begin to trace the many and most varied influences that were gradually preparing the soul of this young 'pagan' (so he styles himself) for the faith and for a high religious vocation. In this is revealed the unifying principle of the book, which is not merely a collection of interesting reminiscences, but a drama unfolding the working of divine Providence, that makes all things turn to the good of a soul that is being led, without detriment to its liberty, from sin to sanctity, from death to life.

Among these influences may be noted the sincere but inadequate religion of his father, his love for France that introduced him to the lingering spirit of mediaeval Catholicism, his contact with the French family mentioned above, his unintended pilgrimage in Rome, where the ancient mosaics and paintings secretly spoke to him of Christ. Among writers, St Thomas, Aldous Huxley, Gilson, Blake,

Hopkins and James Joyce all helped in different degrees and ways to prepare his mind and soul for faith. Strangest perhaps of all, a gentle Hindu monk, whom peculiar circumstances had stranded in America, introduced him to the Imitation of Christ and the Confessions of St Augustine. Rare picture—this quiet, cheerful Indian monk, befriended by noisy young American students, sharing their rooms, even present at their parties. But among all these influences that led him gradually to the Church and her sanctity he admits that human relationship held a high rank, as so often it must and should in man's approach to God.

In addition to affording this valuable study in the psychology of conversion, the occasional short passages on the spiritual life are invaluable for their clear, unhackneyed expression of truths of the supernatural order. Quotations would be out of place here, but this reader is personally convinced that these portions of the book make it rank among the best contemporary writings on Catholic spirituality. Nevertheless, the passage of years alone will determine the permanent spiritual value of the book.

Points that call for criticism have already received attention in English reviews. There is a tendency to judge and condemn places and institutions on subjective grounds, because of his own reactions to them, his own inability to draw from them the good they certainly contain, however mixed with evil. So Cambridge, England and Europe are in turn at least partially condemned. The reader must remember throughout the book that he is sharing in the personal impressions of a sensitive nature, not yet fully matured in its judgments.

Some may feel justified in criticising the book as being too self-centred, stained by the exaggerated profession of personal guilt. But it must be remembered that this autobiography is essentially the history of a soul, not the reminiscences of peoples, places and external events. Of its nature it must centre upon the self, and, through that revelation of self, work back to the knowledge of God. That gradual transference of attention to God will necessarily bring into strong relief the sins of the past, and that in a degree not always appreciated by the less spiritual reader. Otherwise, surely, we would have to judge with the same judgment that far greater story of a soul, of which at times this book reminds us, the Confessions of St Augustine.

The book concludes with an attractive yet balanced picture of the life led today in all Cistercian houses, essentially the same in all countries and ages. It will come as a surprise to many to learn that this ancient way of life, going back through the centuries to St Bernard and St Benedict, enjoys supernatural health and youth nowhere so richly in these days as in the most modern of countries, the United States of America.

We may conclude by expressing our conviction that this autobiography has a work to do, among non-Catholics, by dispelling



prejudice and introducing them, in a homely and human way, to the wonder of the Catholic Church and to the high ideal of holiness that is hers; among converts, by encouraging them on their hard journey and saving them from many misunderstandings; among Catholics, by deepening their love of the Faith and by helping many of them to determine their vocation to the contemplative life, so necessary for society in these times.

BRUNO WALKER, O.C.R.

VISION OF PERU. By Violet Clifton. (Duckworth; 21s.)

This fascinating story of the early history of Peru was, I believe, originally designed to be a biography of a mulatto slave boy who became a Dominican lay brother and is likely to become in the near future Saint Martin of Porres. But the biography grew to a far greater stature nourished by Mrs Clifton's own profound experience of the country as well as her researches into its ancient history. The result is the model of what every life of a saint should be if it were only possible. For she shows Martin as part of the life of a people and the existence of a place. Hagiography so easily isolates the object of its study so that the saint becomes a statue on a pedestal instead of a man who grew up among a people with a peculiar heritage and an immediate history. With other saints this concrete treatment is practically impossible because, at least in Europe, the history is so extravagantly varied and there are so many other saints, contemporaneous or approximately so, that it is beyond human contrivance to make them really living and to preserve them from their pedestal of isolation. But in South America Martin was born in the age of tradition when the Incas were disappearing and the Spaniards taking over everything. Moreover his father was a Spaniard, his mother an African slave; and so Mrs Clifton could see the whole history of that period and place\*somehow turning round in Martin. 'In this storm-coloured, this cloud-coloured one, three Continents took share because, in America, the lust of Europe quickened the womb of Africa, and so was born the son of an enslaved, and of a conquering race.' And the only other saint of that time and place was Rose of Lima, also a Dominican, who appears equally concrete and in her true setting. This book cannot therefore be called a life of Martin or Rose, but is indeed a Vision focussed on those two figures yet embracing an infinite variety in the reality that was and is Peru.

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

DIE GESCHICHTE UND GEBETSSCHULE DES ROSENKRANZES.  
DER ROSENKRANZ UND DAS MENSCHENLEBEN.

Both by Franz Michel William. (Herder; Vienna.)

'The Rosary', says the author of these two attractive books, 'may be compared with a plant that migrates and grows. On the British Isles this spiritual rose bush springs up in luxurious green

foliage; in the lands of central Europe it begins to blossom forth in mysteries, and in the South of Europe these mystic roses receive their final number and form.' The former of these volumes, *The History and School of Prayer of the Rosary*, consists of two parts, the first of which traces the development of the devotion from its beginnings in the 150 Our Fathers, as a substitute for the 150 Psalms of the Divine Office, popular especially in the British Isles, to the 150 Hail Marys of the later Middle Ages and hence to its present form. The second part gives the history of the Rosary in the spiritual life of the Church, including its place in art. The author's scholarly exposition of the growth of the devotion is never heavy or tedious, and his impartiality in assigning to the Irish, to Dominicans and Jesuits alike, their special share in it is a pleasant feature, as are the well-chosen citations from the liturgy, from St Grignon de Montfort and from the Encyclicals of the Popes. The comparison of the artistic conception of Our Lady of the Rosary in the old pictures of Mary enthroned with the Holy Child with the modern one founded on the apparitions at Fatima is particularly suggestive, and the last section on the Rosary as a remedy for the restlessness of our time deserves to be pondered by every Catholic for whom the Rosary has not yet become part of his daily life.

The second book, *Rosary and Human Life*, is a meditation book based on the Fifteen Mysteries of Our Lady's Psalter, but very different from the usual books of this kind. Each of the Joyful Mysteries is divided into three scenes; for example, the Nativity into the events before the departure of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, the arrival at Bethlehem, and the adoration of the Shepherds. The development of these scenes follows the New Testament account and is remarkable for its solid theology and exegesis and the absence of all sentimental imaginings. The Sorrowful Mysteries are handled in a different way: the first part deals with their principal features in the life of all men, and the second with their application to our Lord. The Second Mystery, for example, speaks first of physical humiliation in general, and then of the Scourging at the Pillar. The meditations, which utilise the findings of modern scholarship, give, through their very objectivity and foundation on historical fact, a poignantly real conception of the sufferings of Jesus, which should lead many souls to a deeper realisation of the meaning of the Passion. The structure of the Glorious Mysteries is again different; a theological introduction entitled 'The Human and the Divine Elements in the Resurrection' and in the other mysteries respectively, is followed by the description of the historical event and its importance for our faith. Each of the Fifteen Mysteries is succeeded by an examen and suggestions for its application to our own life.

Both books, which take account also of the most recent English and American publications on the subject, are excellent helps to a

deeper appreciation of the Rosary, and it is to be hoped that an English translation will soon be available.

H. C. GRAEF.

ETHERIE, JOURNAL DE VOYAGE. Text. with introduction, notes and translation by Hélène Pétré. (Collection Sources Chrétiennes, Editions du Cerf; Blackfriars; 11s.6d.)

The renewed publication of this ancient text (first discovered in 1884) will delight alike those who love the Scriptures, those who love the topography and history of the Holyland, lovers of the liturgy and church usages, and a wider circle of readers who can draw great profit from this less usual yet authentic *source chrétienne*.

A certain mystery shrouds the very name and homeland of this indefatigable pilgrim whom we agree to call Aetheria. This devout lady, profoundly respectful of all church usages, avid of any scrap of information that would add to her knowledge and love of the Scriptures and her Lord, seems to have come from the west, crossed Egypt, ventured as far as Sinai, and followed, Bible in hand, the wanderings of the Hebrews. Then Judea and Jerusalem specially held her attention; and to her we owe a detailed description of the liturgy of Jerusalem about 390-410 A.D. This alone makes the account invaluable for students of the liturgy and church history generally. Countless other details add much to our knowledge of biblical topography, and customs and usages at the end of the fourth century.

Dr Pétré's notes and introduction are scholarly and helpful to the general reader, useful to the specialist. Altogether an admirably produced text, a model of its kind.

ROLAND POTTER, O.P.

THE LIFE OF CARDINAL MERCIER, PRIMATE OF BELGIUM. By Henry Louis Dubly. Translated by Herbert Wilson. (The Mercier Press.)

ANGLICANS ET CATHOLIQUES. Le problème de l'union Anglo-Romaine (1833-1933). By Jacques de Bivort de la Saudée. (Plon, Paris.)

The Mercier Press of Cork have issued as an act of piety towards their patron the short life published by Sands in London soon after the death of the late Cardinal of Malines. It may help readers of a later generation to assess the background of the Belgian patriot who presided over the much-debated series of conversations which took place between Catholics and Anglicans under his roof between 1921-6.

These take up the greater part of the latest study by P. de la Saudée, which consists of the first half of a painstaking collation of main sources, such as Lockhart's *Halifax*, Bell's *Davidson* and Oldmeadow's last chapter on Cardinal Bourne, together with certain unpublished material at Hicleton. Another volume of documents is to follow for the benefit of French readers. The work will find



favour among the 'nombreuses personnalités de l'aile droite anglicane' whom the author has in mind, but there will be many—non-Catholic as well as Catholic, abroad as well as in England—who will not follow him in his enthusiastic view of the import of the Malines talks.

H.K.

FROM PAUL TO PIUS. By Teresa Lloyd. (Douglas Organ; 7s.6d.)

The stories of thirty-two heroes of Christianity, most of them canonised, re-told for children. Although the style is simple Miss Lloyd manages to 'get across' the true nature of sanctity, and with the balance kept between the natural and the supernatural, the ordinary and the extraordinary, her saints appear as real people, not pious caricatures. The illustrations are in a like spirit, as for example, St Teresa and her nuns huddled up in a cart which jolts over a boulder-strewn road.

The practice of mentioning a date from secular history so as to set the story against the background of what is learnt from other sources might perhaps be adopted even more frequently.

The publishers recommend this book as a reader for Catholic schools. It is to be hoped that it will be so used.

N.B.O.

DRAW NEAR TO GOD. A Book of Meditations. By D. H. Southgate. (Cumberlege and Oxford University Press; 6s.)

It is easy to be attracted by this little book of meditations although from a Catholic view-point much of it is inadequate, e.g. the meditations on Pentecost and Confession. It is strange too to find so much apologetic in the parts of the meditations entitled 'Adoration'. The original part of the book consists in the method. 'Intercession is the act in which God bestows on us the joy of creative co-operation with him.' This co-operation consists in 'receiving rather than asking'. As one thinks of Christ one 'lives for a while under his influence', and his transforming power can then meet the needs for which one prays. Therefore as one thinks of Christ, one should associate with the thought of him the thought of those persons who are in need of his presence (this is called communion) and thus intercessory prayer becomes the privilege of bringing others into contact with Christ, and thus is fulfilled the author's ambition of emphasising 'the need of deeper meditation in intercession and fuller intercession in meditation'.

TERENCE TANNER.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE MODERN WORLD VIEW. By H. A. Hodges. (S.C.M. Press; 2s.6d.)

There is a tension today, not precisely between religion and science, but between the Christian outlook and that formed by habits of scientific thinking. Professor Hodges therefore thinks it

necessary to present Christian truth without compromise or hesitancy but in a manner that will at least be significant to a scientifically minded unbeliever: the latter is not expected to believe, still less reason to 'the Abrahamic presupposition', but to allow that as a hypothesis and see how other things fall into line. After this there is a prospect 'of making Christianity visible again, of making people see it as a really possible way of looking at things'. On these lines in very limited space he does work out a valuable apologetic. The weakness is, of course, that well-established scientific theories may be wholly transformed in the course of time: Christianity cannot be accepted on those terms. The method is useful, provided we are alert to its limitations. But surely the most effective approach today as at any time in the past is by way of the *fact* of Christ, not indeed as some of the text-books present it, but quite simply with that evidence of historicity which the learning of the critic demands and with that graciousness that the charity of Christ imposes on the apologist.

E.Q.

ALL MY DAYS FOR GOD. Vol. IV. Selection from the writings of St Alphonsus. By J. B. Coyle, C.S.S.R. (Gill, Dublin; 6s.6d.)

This concludes the series of readings for every day in the year from St Alphonsus and embraces the period from the 13th Sunday after Pentecost until Advent. It includes in this broken-up form the whole of 'The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ' which the Saint regarded as the most devotional and useful of his ascetical works. Like many selections of a like nature no references are given, which makes it of little value as an introduction to the works of St Alphonsus.

X.T.Z.

DIFFICULTIES. Questions on Religion with answers by prominent Churchmen. Foreword by the Bishop of London. (Mowbray; 4s.)

Seven bishops, Emile Cammaerts and Dr Prestige are amongst the contributors to this little book. That fact alone would be enough to recommend it. The questions asked are typical of the twentieth century: 'There are plenty of people like me who behave decently and yet get through life without religion. Why should we bother about it?' is an example; and the answers, although brief, are very much to the point. We must disagree with some of the views put forward concerning papal authority and scriptural interpretation, but the great majority of the questions dealt with are fundamental to Christianity and common to all its forms. *Mutatis mutandis* we recommend it to Catholics as a brief Christian apologetic.

The immediate occasion for its publication was the May Mission to London but its usefulness will extend far beyond that date. It is a timely production.

G.B.

## EXTRACTS

RELIGIOUS SISTERS have had their needs considered by a recent assembly of the Cardinals and Archbishops of France. The assembly issued some very pertinent recommendations:

To PRIESTS. In order to redeem the opinion which too many of the faithful and Christian families entertain on the subject of the religious vocation for girls the priest himself must be convinced of the excellence of religious perfection. It would seem possible to give some special course on this subject in the seminary.

The clergy ought in particular to remedy the consequences of an excessive propaganda regarding the legitimate spirituality of Christian marriage; they should not hesitate to teach the superiority of virginity consecrated to God over the married state.

The priest is obliged by duty scrupulously to respect a true vocation to the religious life and not to deflect it for the sake of the parish or of Catholic Action movements.

In deciding a woman's vocation the parish priests, chaplains of Catholic Action, confessors should have before their eyes the excellence of a life entirely consecrated to God by the practice of the evangelical counsels, as well as the advantages and security offered in the life of an Institute, regular or secular, canonically approved by the Church.

The clergy both regular and secular should show esteem for, devotion towards and appreciation of congregations and communities of nuns; it is a matter of honour to defend them against the criticisms which are often levelled at them through an unjust misunderstanding of the facts of religious life.

They must not forget that it is from the priest that the sisters expect an accurate understanding of the obligations as well as the privileges of their state of evangelical perfection.

In particular the clergy are bound to consider their collective and individual responsibility in respect of the sisters and the obligation that is theirs to fulfil their duties imposed by canon law with exactness—superiors, confessors, chaplains and preachers.

The ministry in so far as it concerns the sisters is to be esteemed as a special and particularly delicate ministry, which cannot be fulfilled without preparation and attention if serious harm to the souls is to be avoided. In this respect the following points may be recommended:

- (1) One priest or several in each diocese to specialise in this subject both for the spiritual needs of the sisters and for the instruction of the parish clergy in so far as they provide ordinary or extraordinary confessors and conferences to the nuns.
- (2) A place of importance be reserved in all publications designed for the pastoral clergy for clarifying and assisting in this ministry for the sisters.
- (3) A more active participation with the regular clergy, who



are well acquainted with the practice of religious life and who are often closely associated by a common foundation or spirit with congregations for women.

(4) Finally the clergy should know how to bring the nuns into the full current of parochial life and not to leave them deprived of the apostolic responsibilities which the clergy are more disposed to confide to lay personnel.

These recommendations were followed by others for Superiors of the religious congregations and communities themselves. We hope to quote this second part in a subsequent issue of *LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*. But the text is to be found in the current *Supplement* of *La Vie Spirituelle* (August 1949—Blackfriars Publications, 5s.).

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*CROSS AND CROWN* is 'a Thomistic quarterly of Spiritual Theology', edited by Dominicans of the American Province of St Albert and published by Herder. An immediately attractive feature is its cover, with a simple heraldic device in two colours. Two numbers have appeared, and they go far to justify the Editor's aim, which is 'the presentation of the principles, conclusions and applications of spiritual theology according to the traditions of the Thomistic school in a manner that will have appeal and interest to all who value their interior life' (from the Editor's *Apologia*, which errs however in its kind reference to *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* as 'a splendid quarterly').

Father Garrigou-Lagrange underlines the significance of this new review in his article in the first number:

I was . . . intrigued by the name of the new review and the desire to know what type of magazine it could be. On learning its ascetical-mystical nature, I was profoundly moved by this Christian paradox, that the New World, prosperous and, as has often been said, materialistic, so energetically dedicated to material things and to marvellous productions of technology, is now starting in pursuit of things far higher than its skyscrapers, more precious than its gold and minerals: in a word, it is more specifically interested in spiritual things.

It will give some idea of the scope of *Cross and Crown* if one indicates some of the contributions to its first two numbers. 'Man's Response to the Trinity' is an article in the familiar style of Fr Gerald Vann, 'The Poor and their Fears' are considered by Fr Walter Farrell and 'Psychological Aspects of the Struggle for Perfection' by Fr Menendez-Reigada. In the June number Sister Mary Jeremy writes on 'The Golden Legend' and 'A Perspective of Obedience' is the title of an essay by Father Lumbreras, professor of Moral Theology at the Angelicum in Rome. But *Cross and Crown* is not concerned entirely with the speculative aspects of spirituality,

and 'Mystic of San Esteban' is Fr Jordan Aumann's account of his fellow Dominican Fr John Arintero, author of *The Mystical Evolution in the Development and Vitality of the Church* and himself, it would seem, advanced in mystical union. He died in 1928 at Salamanca, and the preliminary steps towards his possible beatification have already been begun.

The range and authority of the contributions to *Cross and Crown* are alike remarkable, and the new periodical is yet another sign that American Catholics, with their great energy and material resources, are beginning to realise their responsibilities not only in the establishment of the Church as seen by men but in a deeper appreciation of that contemplative life without which Faith itself must perish.



## BOOKS RECEIVED

- Bloomsbury Press.* Ferdinand Valentine, O.P.: *Tango-Tonga*, 6s.  
*de Boccard.* Albert Caraco: *Le Livre des Combats de L'Ame*, 350 frs.  
*Burns, Oates and Washbourne.* Donald Attwater: *Lives of the Saints*, 15s.;  
 Joseph Francis: *The Laws of Holy Mass*, 7s. 6d.; F. R. Hoare: *Gospel of St John in Current English*, 6s. 6d.; C. J. Wilmot, S.J.: *The Priest's Prayer Book*, 12s. 6d.  
*Chronique Sociale de France.* Joseph Folliet: *Les Chretiens au Carrefour*, Vols. I and II, 150 frs., and 180 frs.  
*Duckett.* M.M. Merrick: *Thomas Percy, Seventh Earl*, 15s.  
*Lethielleux.* Jean Pirot: *Paraboles et allegories Evangeliques*, 750 frs.  
*Mercier Press.* M.M. A. M. du Cœur de Jesus, O.D.C.: *A Soul of Silence*, 2s.;  
 Father Gabriel, O.D.C.: *St Teresa of Jesus*, 10s. 6d.  
*Phoenix House.* William Langland (new version by Nevill Coghill): *Visions from Piers Plowman*, 12s. 6d.

## LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

Contributors are encouraged to submit original MSS. or translations from the Fathers. *Literary Communications* should be addressed to The Editor, Life of the Spirit, Blackfriars, Oxford (Tel. 3607). The Editor cannot be responsible for the loss of MSS. submitted; and no MS. will be returned unless accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope.

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